

Capital and Historical Necessity of the Hegelian Dialectic

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This chapter aims to account for the historicity of dialectical knowledge based on the criticism that Marx makes of Hegel. We will ask ourselves what the determinations of the capitalist mode of production are that lead Hegel to describe the general forms of the dialectical method, presenting it, at the same time, in a mystified form. Our objective will be to show the necessity of the development of the dialectical method proposed by Hegel, as well as that of his idealist conception. On this basis, we will seek to explain the reasons why — in Marx's words — Hegel's proposal contains a rational core and a mystical shell.

For such purposes, first, the general determinations of the organization of social labor are described according to the value that is valorized, that is, according to capital. Secondly, Hegel's critique of formal freedom is shown. Finally, the determinations of capital are presented, which explain why Hegel autonomizes consciousness of its determinations through social being, in order to thus establish which elements Marx takes as the rational core of his dialectic and which as its mystical shell.

We affirm that, given that capital enjoys automatic movement, Hegel is presented with the idea that consciousness, which is responsible for carrying out this movement, sets itself in motion. In other words, Hegel reproduces in the realm of thought the real movement of capital as if it were a movement of consciousness autonomized from its material determinations. This allows us to argue that the German philosopher accounts for the general figure of the dialectical method, the affirmation through the self-negation of every real form, while at the same time he loses sight of the historical determination at play that explains the development of dialectics under the capitalist mode of production.

*The debate about dialectics and its relationship
with the dialectic of nature*

The question of the link between Marx and Hegel has been a recurring object of debate in the Marxist field. Recently, and with the support of a group of thinkers who have focused on the methodological aspect of the critique of political economy developed by Marx (Smith, 1990; Moseley, 1993; Moseley and Campbell, 1997; Arthur, 2002; Albritton and Simoulidis, 2003; Robles Báez, 2005; Moseley and Smith, 2014), this question has regained vitality as an object of discussion. The present work is inserted in this general field of studies, contributing to the clarification of the link between the so-called question of the dialectics of nature and Marx's relationship with Hegel.

Regarding this last point, Engels' work (1977, 1979) constitutes the fundamental support for those who emphasize that the dialectical movement is not exclusive to the way in which the production of social life is organized but is already present in the natural forms that precede and accompany it (Branco, 1989). In this sense, Engels states that the laws of dialectics, developed by Hegel, must be applied to different objects, thus constituting a general methodology whose development would consist in adjusting the fundamental principles to particular forms (Engels, 1977: 24-25). Hegel's problem would have been to take these general laws as rules governing the development of reality, but taken as the realization of an idea, transcendent and prior to the material world (Engels, 1977: 24).

The work of Engels, as well as that of Lenin (1974), is taken up by Stalin (1947), who states that there is a Marxist-Leninist philosophy established as dialectical materialism (Diamat). This philosophy would include a general perspective of the world, synthesized in the fundamental laws of dialectics. In this case, the difference between Marx and Hegel would be given because the former treats the real as a multiplicity of varied material phenomena, while the latter approaches it as the embodiment of the 'absolute idea,' of the 'universal spirit,' or of 'consciousness' (Stalin, 1947: 666-667).

Among those who challenge the existence of dialectics in nature, Lukács is one of the most recognized (Lukács, 1975).¹ The fundamental argument of Lukács is that

¹ Bellamy Foster points out a tension in Lukács's proposals expressed in the modification of his positions regarding the dialectic of nature. Now, this does not prevent, according to the purposes of the present work, placing, at least, History

in natural reality the determinations synthesized in the dialectical movement are missing because they emerge with the exercise of human labor. In other words, for Lukács, only through human metabolism with nature can one speak of a dialectic present in the latter.

In the path opened by Lukács' interpretation, the work of Lucio Colletti (1977) constitutes one of the most profound when it comes to arguing the delimitation of dialectics to social reality. Colletti points out that dialectics constitutes an approach that reflects the inverted reality of a particular object: capital. In this sense, paraphrasing Marx, for this author dialectics constitutes the peculiar logic of a peculiar object. The alienated social relation, which sets itself in motion with the purpose of increasing its own magnitude, responds, according to Colletti, to the logic of the Hegelian Absolute, in which every finite determination is the way in which an infinite that exists for itself is realized. That is, capital, as an alienated social relation, conforms to the movement of the Hegelian absolute universal which, instead of being a predicate of the concrete, transforms this concrete into its own manifestation, thus becoming a subject that exists beyond it, as a self-subsistent entity (Colletti, 1977: 169-171).

Now then, Colletti affirms that this dialectical movement, which reflects the inversion proper to capital, is in itself idealist. The self-contradictory character of the finite, highlighted by Hegel in the second chapter of the *Science of Logic*, implies that every finite entity, that is, the material world, engenders by itself its opposite, the infinite, thus appearing as one of its forms of existence. Since the universal infinite is for Hegel thought, according to Colletti, dialectics possesses an idealist character in itself, since it makes the material world a predicate of the absolute, conceived as thought (Colletti, 1977: 77-78). In this way, Colletti points out that Hegelian dialectics is the concrete logic of a concrete object in itself inverted, transformed into an autonomous ideal object. Therefore, being the expression of this inverted object, it can only be an alienated, idealist method (Colletti, 1977: 175). For Colletti, then, a method compatible with scientific procedures must be anchored in the Kantian concept of real opposition and not in that of dialectical contradiction, which he considers devoid of sense (Colletti, 1982: 120). For the Italian philosopher, by proposing that thought and matter coincide, that "things are entities of reason"

and Class Consciousness within the currents that reject the extension of the dialectical method to natural reality (Bellamy Foster, 2014).

(Colletti, 1977: 96), Hegel falls into an idealist conception that cannot find the scientific knowledge of reality. Hence Colletti states that, since the dialectical movement is in itself the inverted theory of an inverted and particular world, there is no dialectics in nature.

Colletti characterizes Hegelian dialectics as idealist and proposes the Kantian concept of real opposition as a support for developing knowledge; therefore, for him, rather than inverting this dialectic, it is a matter of rejecting it in order to promote science (Colletti, 1982: 122, 134). Against Colletti, we will vindicate the rational aspect of Hegelian dialectics, even though in his work it appears as incompatible with scientific knowledge (Arthur, 2005: 255). Lukács points out a continuity between Marx and Hegel in this regard. He affirms that concerning Marxist dialectics, although it is distinguished from Hegel by restricting it to social phenomena, it converges with him in the methodological aspect.

Now then, the approaches in question, although they assert that dialectics governs the movement of capital, do not ask why this method develops under the capitalist mode of production. That is, they do not question why the material determinations of capital generate the necessity for Hegel to present the general forms of the dialectical method, nor do they explain, based on these determinations, its idealist inversion. The issue then involves elucidating why this form of organization of social labor produces among its forms of consciousness the dialectical method, as well as accounting, in the realm of the general determinations of capital, for the necessity that Hegel inverts it in an idealist form.

For those who defended the existence of dialectical movement in the natural world, Marx differed from Hegel by inverting the dialectic, treating it as a type of movement that governs matter and therefore abandoning the idealist viewpoint that made it a copy of the original or ideal world (Engels, 1979: 33), as well as by placing matter as the foundation where Hegel placed the Idea (Stalin, 1947). Building on some of the points of these approaches, particularly the existence of a dialectical movement in nature, our goal is to show the necessity for the dialectic to be developed under the capitalist mode of production, something which, in the arguments of Engels and Lenin, as well as in much of the work that asserts the existence of a dialectic inherent in the natural world, appears, in our view, in an abstract way. That is, both Engels and Lenin (and the interpretive line that goes from Engels to Diamat) affirm that the dialectic arises because capitalism develops, as a product of the advance in the control

of nature, the need for objective knowledge (and the dialectic would be the most powerful form of such knowledge). Now, in this type of approach, dialectical knowledge is explained by the generic development of the productive forces of human labor. What remains to be made explicit is why this development, under the capitalist mode of production, produces this particular form of knowledge. In other words, it is not explained why capital specifically produces this way of objectively knowing the real necessity at play. In this regard, the words of Iñigo Carrera are worth noting: “*The question of the form of scientific knowledge thus presents itself to us as the question of the necessarily historical nature of scientific theory*” (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 251). The approaches linked to Diamat present the problem, in our view, of not making explicit the historical nature of the form of dialectical knowledge itself, a point that we intend to elucidate here.

With this remark, we do not reject the idea that dialectical knowledge implies a step forward regarding the generic human capacity to appropriate natural forces. Indeed, it is a type of knowledge in which the development of the productive forces of human labor is realized, which encompasses the enhancement of this capacity. However, precisely because the development of productive forces is carried in a set of social relations, human knowledge that realizes it is also carried. Thus, under the capitalist mode of production, the generic development of knowledge takes a “specific form”: scientific theory based on logical representation (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 250-253). Well, here we aim to question why the mode of production in question, in order to advance the control of natural forces, also produces the development of dialectical knowledge; just as one can question why this form of organizing social labor produces the specific form of scientific knowledge based on logical representation, the same can be asked regarding the form of dialectical knowledge. Hence, the purpose is to show why this form of consciousness develops only under the capitalist mode of production and not to stop at an alleged generic awareness on the part of human beings.

We will say that, in an alternative way to the argumentative line of Lukács and Colletti, dialectics adjusts to the movement of capital, and that it is the very movement of capital that generates the need for its idealist inversion in the hands of Hegel. In the same sense, we will maintain, against Colletti's approach, that the difference between Marx and Hegel does not imply rejecting the existence of a dialectical movement in the natural world.

Regarding the literature related to Diamat, which does not account for why the dialectical method, governing all material forms, gains momentum under the capitalist mode of production², we will say that it stops at a generic determination of the development of consciousness, insofar as it asserts that capitalism develops objective knowledge because it consists of a historical phase that, like any other, carries the development of the productive forces of labor. This approach does not explain why the organization of social labor by capital demands the explicit formulation of the general forms of the dialectical method.

Before moving forward with this answer, we must clarify what we understand by matter. We maintain that there is dialectics in nature because matter itself consists of an 'affirmation through its own negation.' Every real form is an actuality, a concrete that contains a potential to be unfolded. It is, moreover, a realized necessity, a determination that takes on actual existence in the concrete form that we have before us. Therefore, this concrete form is the realization of a potential that determines it to be what it is and at the same time a potential to be realized, which it contains as an actual concrete form. The concrete that we face thus has, within itself, its own necessity to exist, since the cause that produces it is immanent to it and, at the same time, it carries within itself the potential to become another form than the current one. When the actual concrete form actualizes the potential it carries, it reaches its end, it affirms itself as what it is. However, in this very act, it annihilates itself as such, since it becomes another, even in reproducing itself. Thus, every concrete form, in affirming itself, negates itself.

Asking ourselves about that which determines the concrete real form we face and which exists in it as an already realized necessity, we arrive at the conclusion that the simplest form of existence that determines our starting point, the real form we analyze, is determination itself. That is to say, we end up asking ourselves about the necessity of necessity itself, questioning what determination is in its purity (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 257-258). If we said that every concrete form is at the same time an actualized necessity and a potential to be realized, we arrive at asking ourselves about

² When we say that it is not explicitly stated 'in particular' why under the capitalist mode of production the general forms of dialectics unfold, we point out that within the framework of Diamat the explanation given applies to every social form. That is, since humanity can only develop the productive forces, in doing so it generates the need for dialectical knowledge. However, although as a general framework this answer may be satisfactory, it is, in our view, necessary to make explicit why it is the capitalist relations that demand its development, under penalty of stopping at an abstract answer that does not advance on the more concrete determinations that carry this movement that belongs to humanity in a general sense.

this very duplicity, about the affirmation through the very negation in which every real form consists, whatever it may be. Iñigo Carrera says that:

The determination itself is as real an abstract form of its own as any other. But it is not a real abstract form equal to any other. Like the others, it begins by presenting itself to us as a concrete form. But, as such a concrete form, it is pure potential necessity, the necessity of the determination itself, and, consequently, an abstract form (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 257-258).

When asking ourselves what the process of existence of a form that contains within itself a potential to be realized holds as power, we see that as an object it is pure potential. In determination as such, what is realized is the pure existence of the potential, the fact of containing within itself something yet to be realized —and yet that is the real form in which it consists. Iñigo Carrera continues: “But, just as this actual existence of theirs is a necessity to transcend itself in realized determination, such a simple form is at the same time existence in potential. As such, simple existence, ‘matter,’ is a contradiction in itself” (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 258).

We then arrive at the point that we are interested in showing. Matter is, for us, contradiction in its purity. When we say that there is dialectic in nature, we mean that every real form is, in its simplest determination, material. Therefore, it constitutes a statement that is realized by negating itself.³

On the Freedom of the Commodity Producer

To ask ourselves about the need that the capitalist mode of production has to generate among its forms of consciousness that which confronts it in the form of dialectical knowledge, we must first begin by answering what consciousness as such is.

What is at stake in any phase of the history of human society is the organization of social labor. That is, the allocation of the respective quotas and the ways in which the specific useful tasks will be carried out by each of the portions that make up the total labor force of society. Put in other terms, every human society needs to produce itself, a requirement of which is the organization of the execution of the labor necessary for it. The organization in question is carried by a set of social relations (Marx and Engels, 1985: 19; Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 10)

³ Affirming itself through its own negation is what matter is (Iñigo Carrera, 2014a: 86; 2013: 257-258). It is not a predicate of it, as if the movement happened to something that it is prior to setting itself in motion; the process of affirming itself through its own negation is matter itself.

Consciousness is the concrete way in which each individual organizes their participation in this process. That is to say, it is the capacity that the individual human subject has to organize their work output, which as such is a moment of that output. In this way, it is not an attribute alien to the generic human action of transforming the environment into one for oneself; it is the moment of the action whose determination is precisely the organization of the action itself. It is, therefore, a practical moment of this action with the same status as its manual output.

Hence, for a materialist approach, it is not, on the one hand, a question of the organization of social labor, and on the other, of the way in which each individual consciously decides to participate in it, as if the assignment at play existed outside the way in which individuals carry it out. As Marx and Engels present it: 'Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of men is their real life process' (Marx and Engels, 1985: 26). Put the other way around, the organization of the discharge of individual work quotas is only carried by equally individual consciousnesses; this organization has no existence outside consciousness. From this, it follows that affirming, as Marx does, that social being determines consciousness (Marx, 1997: 5) does not imply that social being is a thing to which consciousness must, in turn, react, returning the determination it receives from it—whether to reproduce it or to revolutionize it. Social being—the social relations in which individuals enter to produce their own life—takes shape in the individual consciousnesses of human beings; it is immanent to them.

Now then, what is the specificity of consciousness under capitalist relations of production? In other words, what distinguishes the consciousness of the doubly free individual? To answer this question, we must look at the way in which social labor is organized. Marx says that

if objects for use become commodities, this is solely because they are products of private labor carried out independently of one another. The complex of these private labors is what constitutes the overall social labor. Since producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their work, the specifically social attributes of these private labors are manifested only within the framework of such exchange. Or in other words: in fact, private labors do not attain reality as parts of social labor as a whole, except through the relations that exchange establishes between the products of labor and, through them, between the producers (Marx, 1999a: 89)

As long as the organization of social labor is carried out privately and independently and, therefore, through the ability to change the products of labor, the

commodity producer consciously and voluntarily governs their individual labor process, without being subject to personal dependency relationships with anyone. That is, the direct producer organizes their individual labor output as they see fit, showing it in the sale of their product if it was a necessary part of social labor. The producer, then, organizes their individual labor output privately and, therefore, autonomously.

The commodity producer is not bound by personal dependency relationships. He is free because he is subject to his own social relationship, because he must produce value to reproduce himself. Full control over his own individual labor process is one with the impossibility of controlling his social powers, which means, for the commodity producer, placing his consciousness and will at the service of value production (Iñigo Carrera, 2007: 56). This double condition arises because when the individual performs his share of labor, he does not know whether it is socially necessary work, a fact that will be revealed with the sale of his commodity. Thus, the free individual faces his social relationships as something that dominates him and that he cannot control. At the same time, these social relationships create the appearance that the social bond is the result of the exercise of one's own individual will, as if it were prior to said bond.

The commodity is the result of the nonexistence of any direct organization that precedes the unloading of the aliquots of social labor that are individual labor (Iñigo Carrera, 2014: 75). This lack of direct unity is what the market expresses as the moment in which the different private labors test whether they were part, at the moment of being carried out, of the total socially necessary labor to reproduce the material life of humanity. To say that the social attribute of labor, objectified in its product, value, organizes production and social consumption, refers to the fact that this unity is indirect, it is the prerogative of the commodity. Therefore, the unity of the organization of social labor is realized under its opposite: the lack of direct unity.

Now then, it becomes evident in the exposition made by Marx that simple commodity circulation, whose objective is individual consumption, does not constitute the movement through which the shares of individual labor are assigned. In the unfolding of the determinations of value, it appears that the true subject of social production is the value that valorizes itself, the capital:

Autonomous forms, the monetary forms that the value of commodities takes in simple circulation, are reduced to mediating the commodity exchange and disappear in the final

result of the movement. In contrast, in the circulation C - M - C, both the commodity and money function only as different modes of existence of value itself: money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular mode of existence or, so to speak, only disguised. Value constantly passes from one form to another, without being lost in this movement, thus becoming an automatic subject. [...] in reality, value here becomes the subject of a process in which, continuously changing the forms of money and commodity, it modifies its own magnitude, as surplus value is extracted from itself as original value, it self-valorizes. The movement in which it adds surplus value is, indeed, its own movement, and its valorization, therefore, self-valorization (Marx, 1999a: 188).

Capital turns the direct worker into a doubly free individual: free from personal dependency relations and free from the objective conditions necessary to start their own work process, free from the means of production. That is why the direct producer faces their social relations as the result of their free will, as a set of ties that they consciously and voluntarily decide to establish with others (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 17-18).

Now then, where does this form of consciousness that inverts the content of the social relationship, making individuals face themselves as mutually independent, arise from? It arises from the sphere of circulation. In it, freedom, equality, and property prevail, since buyers and sellers of commodities appear as autonomous subjects—whose status as persons is legally sanctioned—determined to enter into a sale contract in which they dispose of what they possess in exchange for the commodity of the other (Marx, 1999a: 214). The content of these appearances indicates the following: in the face of freedom stands the forced nature of the sale of labor power; in the face of equality in the exchange of equivalents, the exploitation of the worker by capital; in the face of property, the condition of the doubly free individual of the worker; in the face of self-interest, the determination of consciousness and will by social capital, for which the worker is a forced one (Marx, 1999b: 721-725).

In summary, the interdependence that governs the process of social metabolism under the capitalist mode of production, in which the consumption of each individual depends on having been able to sell their own commodity—which implicitly involves the consumption of others—appears to the consciousness of these individuals as arising from the exercise of their own consciousness and will. The fact that the commodity producer must, in order to behave as a person, realize the personification of their commodity, appears to their will in an inverted form.

Likewise, the fact of having to place their consciousness and will at the service of value production presents itself to the eyes of the commodity producer as the result of their lack of social ties when it comes to initiating their individual labor process. That is, it presents itself as their independence from others. Hence, they face their social interdependence as the effect of their independence, as the result of their exchange with others once their autonomy in the sphere of use-value production has been exercised. And just as the appearance rises that their interdependence springs from their independence, the private producer perceives their peers as individuals who freely dispose of their consciousness and will. Consequently, their own freedom finds, for them, a limit in the exercise of this same freedom by others (Íñigo Carrera, 2007: 64-65). To advance on the link between Marx and Hegel, let us see how the latter treats the freedom of the consciousness of the commodity producer.

About free conscience

In the context of Hegel's philosophy, it makes no sense to ask about the determination of consciousness by social being. On the contrary, the question is about elucidating which figure of consciousness is realized in a certain historical phase. Precisely because for Hegel consciousness determines itself and sets itself in motion as the subject of its own movement, it is unfounded to question which form of social labor organization produces it.

A clarification is necessary here. We use the words consciousness and thought as synonyms in the context of Hegelian philosophy, even though Hegel expressly distinguishes one from the other; he considers consciousness the first position of “absolute knowledge” in its development (Hegel, 2006: 51-105) and thought as a form of self-consciousness (in fact, a paragraph in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is called “Introduction: the stage of consciousness reached here: thought” (Hegel, 2006: 121-124). Moreover, consciousness has its own set of sections in the *Encyclopedia* (Hegel, 2000: 469-473) and thought appears in the “Prologue” of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the mediated unity of what, conceptually, appears as separate: thought and being (Hegel, 2006: 36-37). Now then, Hegel says that

At the beginning, determinability only seems to be so by referring to another, and its movement seems to be communicated to it by a foreign force; but that which has its being in itself and is self-movement is precisely what is implied in that simplicity of thought, for this is the thought that moves and differentiates itself, the very inwardness, the pure concept

[...]. The concrete figure, moving itself, becomes simple determinability; with this, it rises to logical form and is in its essentiality; its being there concretely is only this movement and is a being there immediately logical (Hegel, 2006: 38).

Consciousness, as the starting point of the movement that Hegel accompanies until it reaches knowledge, is already this movement, it is this contradiction that enriches itself by its own impulse. That is why it is already thought, it is already, according to the quote, pure concept. Consciousness, in this sense, sets itself in motion and becomes thought. By treating them as equivalents, we point out that consciousness is the starting point of what is going to become thought, and this movement is carried out by its own unfolding, by its own contradictory character. Thus, we intend to emphasize that consciousness sets itself in motion to become what it already is, when if the path taken by Hegel to show this transition were taken as the object, it would be necessary to stop at its different phases.

For Hegel, the principle that explains the organization of every society is a certain figure of the spirit that is realized in it and is surpassed insofar as consciousness experiences the contradiction that gives rise to it (Hegel, 2006: 54, 179). In fact, Hegel concludes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with the following words:

The goal, absolute knowledge, or the spirit that knows itself as spirit has as its path the remembrance of the spirits as they are in themselves and as they carry out the organization of their realm. Its preservation, seen from the side of its being there free, which manifests itself in the form of the contingent, is history, but seen from the side of its conceptual organization, it is the science of *knowledge that manifests itself* (Hegel, 2006: 473).

This knowledge that manifests itself is the transit of consciousness that asserts itself by negating its own determinations. But, with this negation, Hegel does not aim for consciousness to reject its determinations for the sake of asserting its independence. In fact, he challenges the idea that the freedom of consciousness depends on maintaining an external connection with its own determinations. He says in the *Philosophy of Right*:

The will is the unity of these two moments, *particularity* reflected in itself and therefore redirected to *universality: individuality*. It is the *self-determination* of the I to put itself into oneness as the negative of itself, that is, to set itself as *determined*, limited, and at the same time remain with itself, or in its *identity with itself* and universality, and, in determination, unite only with itself. [...] Here it can be pointed out that, although when it is said *the will is universal, the will is determined*, the will is expressed as a presupposed subject or substratum, it is not, however, something concluded and universal before its determination and the overcoming and ideality

of that determination, but is only will as that activity which mediates itself and as return to itself (Hegel, 2004: 36-37).

For Hegel, the will is not the activity of abstracting from all determination, presenting itself as a pure possibility of confronting the existent. The will is to give oneself a determined existence and, at the same time, to remain and reproduce oneself as will in this determination. In this very thing, for Hegel, freedom consists: "But the truth of this formal universality, which is by itself indeterminate and finds its determination in that matter, is the universality that determines itself, the will, freedom" (Hegel, 2004: 45). This means that to be free does not imply separating from one's own determinations, abstracting from them as if they were limits to one's own discretion over one's individuality; on the contrary, it implies having oneself as object, recognizing oneself as the limit that one's own will gives itself. That is, to remain identical in separation, to affirm oneself as one in the negation of unity. In short, for Hegel freedom consists in the recognition of one's own determinations. Therefore, it is not a question of making the free will that which rejects from itself the figures that the "I" takes—according to Hegel's words, the free will necessarily has the form of an "I"—but the existence of that "I" as determined (Hegel, 2004: 35). Free consciousness is, in this way, that which knows its own determinations, which knows itself as determined and finds its freedom in determination, taking it as object. Thus, Hegel develops a form of knowledge that does not externally oppose determination and freedom (Taylor, 2010: 267). Hegel says that

The independence of the one existing-for-itself, driven to its peak, is abstract, formal independence, which destroys itself; it is the highest and most obstinate error, which takes [itself] for the highest truth—manifesting itself in more concrete forms, such as abstract freedom, as the pure I, and therefore subsequently as evil. It is this freedom that errs to the point of placing its essence in this abstraction and flatters itself on attaining itself in its purity within this being-in-itself. This independence more precisely constitutes the error of considering as negative what is its own essence and maintaining itself as negative against it [...]. Reconciliation consists in the recognition that that against which negative behavior is directed is rather what constitutes its own essence; and (such reconciliation) only occurs as a giving up of the negativity of its being-for-itself instead of remaining steadfast in it (Hegel, 1993a: 220).

So, the essence of freedom does not consist in the “I” becoming independent of every figure, preserving its purity as a beyond of all determination.⁴ On the contrary, Hegel says, the essence of the “I” lies in remaining firm in that against which this “I” wants to assert itself, in the determinations of this “I.” This transition from abstract consciousness to one that recognizes itself in its own objectivity is the becoming of the spirit. This can be read in the famous passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which we quote at length:

Only in these three moments has the concept of self-consciousness been fulfilled: a) the pure I not differentiated from its first immediate object. b) But this immediacy is itself absolute mediation, it is only as the overcoming of the independent object, or it is desire. The satisfaction of desire is, certainly, the reflection of self-consciousness in itself or the certainty that has become truth. c) But the truth of this certainty is, rather, the doubled reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. It is an object for consciousness, which places in itself its other being or difference as something null, thus being independent [...]. Insofar as a self-consciousness is the object, it is both I and object (Hegel, 2006: 112-113).

Self-consciousness thus synthesizes this generic movement of consciousness in which it becomes what it is by negating its successive figures. In other words, self-consciousness shows how consciousness (like, for Hegel, anything else) realizes itself by negating its own negations, affirming itself in them. For Hegel, every determination, by its own movement, passes over into another, so affirming itself through its own negation is characteristic of all that is real and not exclusive to consciousness. However, only with the science of spirit, with the unfolded form of the spirit itself — that is, with Hegel's philosophy — does the generic movement of affirmation through its own negation become conscious (Hegel, 2000: 602). He writes in the 'Prologue' to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Only the spiritual is *real*; it is the essence or the *being in itself*, what is maintained and the *determined* — *being another and being for itself* — and what remains in itself in this determinability or in its being outside itself or is in and for itself. But this being in and for itself is first for us or in itself, it is the spiritual substance. And it has to be this also for itself, it has to be the knowledge of the spiritual and the knowledge of itself as spirit, that is, it has to be as object and it also has to be so immediately, as a transcended object, reflected in itself [...]. The

⁴ Hegel criticizes this appearance, by pointing out the abstract nature of that way of conceiving freedom, a way that rises, following Iñigo Carrera, as a form of necessary consciousness under the capitalist mode of production, since for the producers of commodities the independence of their own will appears in conflict with that of others, both being mutually external rather than forms of existence of their social interdependence (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 238).

spirit that knows itself developed thus as spirit is science. This is the reality of that spirit and the kingdom that the spirit constructs for itself in its own element (Hegel, 2006: 19)

The movement that in science becomes conscious, Hegel calls 'remaining in itself in being outside itself' and considers it the most general determination of the real, the heart of dialectical movement. Here resides, in our view, the rational core of his philosophy. Before moving forward, a general clarification regarding Hegelian philosophy is appropriate.

Hegel makes the movement of thought the own of everything that is, of all that is real. That is why it is a knowledge, to that extent, objective, capable of accounting for its most abstract determinations (Hegel, 1993b: 267). Since Hegel does not see that social being determines consciousness, he does not need to ask what specific social being is the one that produces dialectical consciousness. However, Hegel demonstrates the necessity for the spirit to develop until it recognizes its own dialectical movement. He carries out both a philosophy of history and a history of philosophy, in which he shows the progress of thought until it reaches its own philosophical system, in which the specific determination of the Idea is realized as Spirit. In this sense, Hegel develops the necessity of each figure that thought takes, placing this necessity in the contradictions in which it incurs with itself. Our point is that by treating thought as a subject that sets itself in motion, the question of its determination does not arise for Hegel, he does not see the necessity to ask if there is something outside of its own element that produces it. To introduce social being as this determination is what leads us to ask what social being takes shape in dialectical knowledge—a question that within the Hegelian system cannot be asked.

In line with the works of Diamat, we consider that the development of nature is governed by dialectical movement, just as Hegel presents it — for him, nature is “the Idea in the form of being” (Hegel, 2000: 305). Hence, we considered it necessary to make a detour through his work, to show in what sense we rely on it when affirming that natural forms are governed by a dialectical movement; more specifically: to indicate that affirmation through its own negation is the movement in which matter exists, it is that, as movement, matter is (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 257-258). Thus, after revisiting what we recover from Hegel, the following questions arise: why, if dialectics is the movement of all that is real, does only capitalism produce

consciousness of it? Why does the figure of Hegel appear only with capitalism, the one that synthesizes its general determinations?

Marx's critique

Capital is the autonomous subject of production under capitalism (Robles Báez, 1997; Postone, 2006; Robles Báez, 2011; Iñigo Carrera, 2013). Consciousness, we said, is the human attribute responsible for organizing the individual discharge of social labor; under the capitalist mode of production, the organization of labor is carried out by determining consciousness as alienated in the social powers of its labor. In short, it is a consciousness, which is a human attribute, placed as an attribute of a social relationship (Iñigo Carrera, 2014: 76).

As for the social relationship through which humanity produces its life, capital encompasses the development of the productive forces of labor and, with it, that of the consciousness that organizes it. Since consciousness is the human attribute responsible for organizing labor, the progress in the development of the productive forces can only take shape in the progress of human knowledge.⁵ Again, the question is about elucidating why only under the capitalist mode of production does the advancement in knowledge go through the recognition of dialectics as the general movement of all that is real, as well as specifying why this dialectic is inverted in Hegel's philosophy.

The answer lies in the fact that the capitalist mode of production is the first in history to extend freedom as a general social relation. Previous modes of production were based on personal dependence relations, on direct links in which certain members of society personally possessed the capacity to organize the work of others.

⁵ Like any form of organization of social labor, capitalism develops the productive forces, but it does not do so abstractly, as if this were a generic determination of humanity; it does so because its purpose is to produce relative surplus value, it does so to reproduce itself as a social relation (being a social relation whose purpose as an alienated subject is to reproduce itself and not to reproduce human life). On this subject, Iñigo Carrera writes: "The historical role that the capitalist mode of production plays in the development of the material productive forces of society is not limited to an abstract constant revolution of the technical bases of production. The key lies in the concrete form of this constant revolution" (Iñigo Carrera, 2013: 15-16). Capital develops the productive forces of social labor in order to produce relative surplus value. That is why this specific historical form demands progress in knowledge. This general determination of the advancement of knowledge is what drives the emergence of the dialectical method, insofar as it is the most powerful form of human knowledge to date. What we intend to show is why this most powerful form consists of taking all that is real as an affirmation through its own negation.

In contrast, Iñigo Carrera writes regarding the free consciousness of the commodity producer:

The act in which his consciousness and will independently dominate the determinations of his individual labor, affirming himself as a free individual, is the act in which his consciousness and will give body to his impotence to dominate the social determinations of his labor, realizing his absolute lack of freedom with respect to them [...]. His free consciousness and will are the way of realizing his alienated consciousness. The producer needs to apply the attributes of his human personality, his consciousness and will, as if they were attributes of his commodity. He has to act as the personification of his commodity (Iñigo Carrera, 2007: 59).

The consciousness of the commodity producer is the first in the history of humanity that is free because it is alienated. The producer asserts himself as free by consciously and voluntarily organizing his individual work while lacking freedom with respect to his social being. Put another way: he acts as a person when he personifies something external to him, an objectified form that determines his consciousness as an alienated one. Thus, the consciousness of the commodity producer has within itself a movement in which it behaves as free at the very moment when it is determined by a thing that appears as external.

In societies based on personal dependency relationships, the individual had their bond placed in a person, so it did not appear to them, when carrying out their generic being, that is, working, that they were deprived of relationships with others. It could never occur to them that they were free in relation to a particular person, precisely because the social attribute was carried personally. On the contrary, under the capitalist mode of production, individuals are free because their consciousness and will are placed at the service of an objectified form that carries the social bond with others, which sets itself in motion and deprives the producer, at the moment of working, of the social relationship they have with others. When the individual sees the commodity, they see the exercise of their freedom opposed to themselves, they see their consciousness alienated. In other words: they see their freedom as an external determination, opposed to themselves. This, we say, does not happen to an individual whose general social relationship is organized by bonds of personal dependence, since they cannot confront their social being as the result of their own arbitrium, and therefore cannot view their determination by social being as opposed to their person. In short, only an individual whose productive attribute is freedom has the possibility of questioning the determination of their consciousness by a social relationship.

Well then, our point is that capitalism engenders the recognition of the dialectical movement of all that is real because it confronts consciousness with this determination. Only consciousness alienated in the commodity can see its freedom as opposed to itself, as rejecting itself by setting itself up as personification and affirming itself in this act as free, as affirming itself through its negation. Again, it is not a question of the dialectic being restricted to thought or resulting in a category, but that this dialectic between freedom and determination that governs the consciousness of the commodity producer is what provides the potential for dialectical knowledge to unfold. That is why, although matter, as a more abstract determination of the real, consists in an affirmation through its own negation, it is only when a specific social being confronts consciousness with this condition of its own that dialectical knowledge appears synthesized in its general forms. The rational core of the Hegelian dialectic consists in having revealed this movement of affirmation through its own negation.

Regarding the mystical shroud of dialectics, this is because, in Hegel's hands, affirmation through negation itself is the movement that governs the development of thought 'set in motion by itself.' That is, abstracted from its determination by social being. Now, this abstraction of thought from its material determinations is the result of the very alienated form in which social labor is organized. Marx says that

The man estranged from himself is also the thinker estranged from his essence, that is, from the natural and human essence. His thoughts are, therefore, spirits that live outside of nature and man. In his Logic, Hegel has enclosed all these spirits together and has understood each of them, first, as negation, that is, as alienation of human thinking, then as negation of the negation, that is, as overcoming this alienation, as true externalization of human thinking; but, still caught in estrangement, this negation of the negation is, in part, the restoration of these spirits in estrangement, in part the fixation in the ultimate act, relating to themselves in alienation as the true existence of these spirits [...]. That is, Hegel replaces that fixed abstraction with the act of abstraction that revolves around itself (Marx, 1999c: 204-205)

We affirm, in line with Marx's argument, that Hegel makes abstraction turn upon itself, since it is the estranged thought of the human being, its subject. Now, Marx indicates that this estranged thought is that of estranged (*alienated*) humanity. This implies, in our view, that it is the very alienation of humanity in the product of its labor that produces estranged thought, external to it, set by Hegel as its own engine, as a thought that turns upon itself. For us, it is about thought set in motion by itself,

alienated, as a result of the alienation produced by the organization of social labor by capital.

Thus, Hegel takes the autonomization of the organization of social labor, which sets itself in motion with the purpose of producing more of itself, as if it were one of the human forms responsible for organizing such labor: consciousness. Instead of seeing how the generic necessity of reproducing life through labor takes the form of an alienated social relationship, which therefore alienates consciousness from its social being, he conceives the autonomization of the social relationship as if it were the autonomization of thought, its self-activation. Again, since consciousness is responsible for organizing social labor, the autonomized organization in the value that valorizes itself is presented to this consciousness, in its Hegelian form, as the autonomization of thinking of its material determinations. We believe that the following words of Marx go in this sense:

The philosophical spirit is nothing but the alienated spirit of the world thinking within its self-alienation, that is, perceiving itself in an abstract form. *Logic* is the *money* of the spirit, the *thought*, speculative, *value* of man and of nature; its essence that has become completely indifferent to any real determination and is, therefore, unreal; it is the *alienated thought* that thereby abstracts from nature and from real man; *abstract thought* (Marx, 1999c: 187).

This abstract, alienated thought, according to Marx, is due to the fact that the real human being itself is alienated. What we assert here is that this abstraction of the thought of its subject occurs because the subject of social life under the capitalist mode of production is an autonomous one, it is value in the process of valorization. This subject, which is the social relationship materialized in the product of labor, opens the process of social production with the object of producing more of itself. It is, then, an automatic process, which sets itself in motion. Hegel, in our view, transposes this process to thought, as if thought, as spirit, had the capacity to set its own movement in motion, when, as we saw, it is a human attribute that organizes the discharge of social labor. Thus, the automatic character of the alienated social relationship is what determines the alienated character of consciousness, presenting this alienated form to Hegel as the capacity of thought to set itself in motion as spirit. Marx says that

The estrangement of consciousness is not considered as *expression* (expression that is reflected in knowledge and thinking) of the *real* estrangement of the human essence. *True* estrangement, which manifests itself as real, is, on the contrary, according to its most intimate and hidden essence (which only philosophy brings to light), nothing other than the

phenomenon of the estrangement of the real human essence, of *self-consciousness* (Marx, 1999c: 192).

In Marx's words, the estrangement of consciousness is not considered an expression of the real estrangement of humanity. Hegel does not confront the alienation of consciousness in the social relationship turned automatic. On the contrary, he assigns to thought the capacity to "turn upon itself," to set itself in motion, to be, in our view, "automatic." That is, by ignoring its material determinations, Hegel attributes to thought the character that capital has as the automatic subject of the organization of social life. He does so because the very alienation of humanity determines the appearance of an alienated thought. In this estranged character of the alienated real being lies the mystifying aspect of Hegelian dialectics. Let us then gather the necessity that Marx finds to invert it. He writes that

the existence of predicates is the subject: therefore, the subject the existence of subjectivity, etc. Hegel substantivizes predicates, objects, but he substantivizes them by putting them apart from the real substantivity, from their subject. Then, the real subject appears as a result, whereas one should have started from the real subject, in order to then consider its objectification (Marx, 1982: 336-337).

The movement of affirming oneself through one's own negation. This movement is what generally characterizes the dialectic; hence its rational core and that which in Diamat and in Engels' approach was established as what Marx takes from Hegel. However, since, like all forms of consciousness, the dialectic is a product of the social being that determines it, in both approaches, although it is correctly emphasized that this movement is not exhausted in social forms, it lacks specification of the historical condition on which the recognition of the general structures of the dialectic depends. That is: although these perspectives succeed in pointing out that capitalism, in developing the productive forces, harbors the need to enhance scientific knowledge and, with it, shapes the dialectic (which, it is worth remembering once again, is concretely carried by the extraction of relative surplus value), they do not emphasize enough, in our view, the historical nature of this type of knowledge. That is to say, they do not specify why the advance of scientific knowledge takes the particular concrete form of a method whose foundation is to maintain that every determination is an affirmation that contains its own negation within itself.

We place our work among those who indicate that dialectics is not exclusive to the social world. However, we have set out to show that its structures only develop

because capital is the alienated subject of current social life, a subject that makes free consciousness the form of alienated consciousness, thus confronting it with its own contradictory character. We then maintained that capital reveals to consciousness its internal dialectic because it affirms it as free consciousness that governs its process of individual labor, in the very act in which, by realizing itself as such, it confronts it with its own freedom as a thing external to it, as a commodity it must personify. Capital thus implies confronting consciousness with its own freedom as objectified in the product of labor, as an external thing that determines it.

Dialectics, in the hands of Hegel, appears as an automatic movement set in motion by thought become spirit, which implies, in Marx's words, assigning an independent existence to the predicates —we say, to the consciousness bearing the organization of social labor— of the true subject, of capital as an objectified social relation. Hence its mystical envelope. This does not prevent, in our view, that it contains a rational core, as follows from Colletti's argument. Nor does it prevent there being continuity between Marx and Hegel regarding the methodological aspect of the latter's philosophy. Against these approaches, which do not show the reasons why Hegelian dialectics arises from a particular social being, here we have attempted to explain its mystical envelope based on the form of the social relations that produce it.

Conclusions

We begin our work by showing that under the capitalist mode of production, the product of labor carries the organization of production and consumption, transforming into the subject of social life. This subject encompasses a type of mediated unity between production and consumption: it is a unity in the discharge of concrete useful works by individual capitals.

We subsequently indicate that the generic necessity of the development of dialectical consciousness arises because capital makes workers doubly free, that is, because for them their social being, their own being, appears as something alien that dominates them and in which at the same time they affirm themselves as free; that is: capital causes consciousness to confront its own dialectical condition, since it is free because it is alienated in the social attributes of its labor. Here then resides, in Marx's words, the rational core of Hegelian dialectics: the discovery of the act of affirming oneself through one's own negation as the generic determination of the real.

Regarding the mystified character of this dialectic, we argued that it consisted of taking thought as the subject of its own development, as an element that sets itself in motion. In this movement, Marx said, Hegel assigned independent existence to predicates, “substantivizing them by setting them apart from their real substantivity, from their subject” (Marx, 1982: 336); that is, Hegel took thought as “estranged” from the human being, precisely because the human being is alienated in the way they organize the reproduction of their own generic life. Hegel expressed the alienation of the consciousness of the commodity producer by supposing that thought sets itself in motion, when it concerns the way each individual organizes their discharge of individual labor as an organ of the social. Hence, Marx found the need to invert the dialectic to show its rational core.

Well, inverting the dialectic involves recognizing the true subject of capitalist society; it is not about the consciousness of the commodity producer or the generically human consciousness, but about capital. Just as capital is an autonomous way of organizing social labor, whose object is to reproduce itself, Hegel is presented with the idea that the bearer of this organization, consciousness in its generic condition as thought, is autonomous, that is, it sets itself. Hence Hegel attributes to consciousness that which is the power of the product of labor in which it is alienated and, to that extent, denies the necessity of overcoming that form of consciousness. Hegel, by investing consciousness with the attribute it lacks under our general social relationship, loses sight of the need to question the historical determination of this form of consciousness and, consequently, the conditions that this social relationship generates in the face of its own ruin. Hegel develops the general forms of the dialectic and at the same time assigns this movement to a predicate abstracted from the true subject of contemporary society. That is why he loses sight of the fact that said subject harbors the necessity of overcoming itself.